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THE CONDOR  
A MAGAZINE OF  
WESTERN ORNITHOLOGY.



Edited by  
Joseph Grinnell

William Lovell Finley  
Joseph Mailliard  
Associates

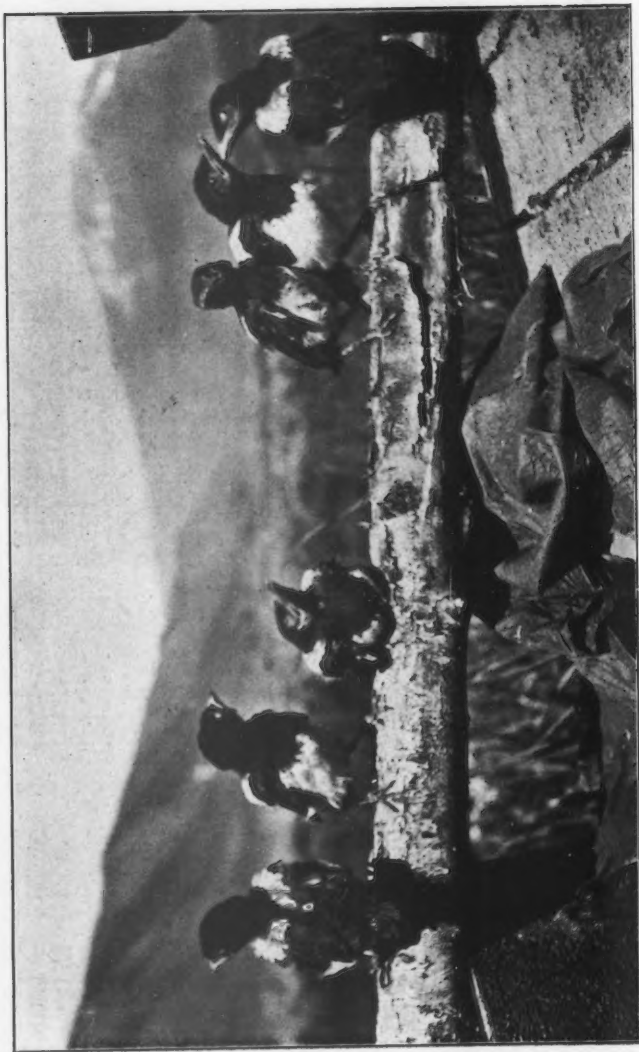
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COLORADO MAGPIES THREE WEEKS OLD  
*Photographed by E. R. Warren*

# THE CONDOR A MAGAZINE OF WESTERN ORNITHOLOGY.



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## PHOTOGRAPHING MAGPIES

BY EDWARD R. WARREN

I N many parts of the West the conglomeration of sticks and twigs, which a magpie gathers for a nest, is a conspicuous object in the trees and bushes along the streams and elsewhere. Rude and shapeless as they look when viewed from the outside, they are really comfortable homes; for inside the mass of sticks is built a nest cavity of mud, lined with fine rootlets, and overhead is a roof of twigs, with the entrance usually on the side, tho one occasionally runs across a nest with little or no roof. The cavity is often eight to ten inches deep. The nest shown in the picture is not the one in which the young birds lived; that was in a clump of willows so thick that the nest would not photograph well. These nests are used for several seasons: The one in which my family lived was occupied for at least three summers, and in the winter of 1900-01 was partly destroyed by storms and the weight of the snow; in the spring of 1901 a new nest was built in an adjoining clump.

The nests of *Pica pica hudsonica* are anywhere from ten to forty feet above the ground; but I think between ten and twenty feet will cover three-fourths of the cases. The one in the cut showing eight eggs was very exceptional, not much over three feet from the ground to the front door: just a nice height for photographic purposes. I promised myself a nice series of pictures of the young birds from that nest; but when I thought the time had come for them to be sitting up and taking notice, and went there with the camera, I found someone else had also taken notice and the nest was empty.

The family of young birds whose pictures I did take were in a nest near Crested Butte, Colorado, and, as luck would have it, I found them the very day they hatched, so that their ages were known exactly. That was on the 27th day of May, 1900. It was my first season at photographing young birds and I tried some impossibilities in the way of attempts at pictures in the nest. The picture taken at thirteen days old, tho poor, shows their growth from the naked natal condition during that time. At 18 days they had advanced still more, and another three days showed an astonishing progress; for on the twenty-first day I had my

hands full to get the picture, the youngsters being most decidedly lively, and keeping me busy replacing them as they hopped off the perch. This, one or more was sure to do when I thought I had them all right and turned toward the camera. But patience was finally rewarded.

Learning by experience, when I went to take the four weeks old picture I enlisted the aid of the two young daughters of the friend on whose ranch the nest was situated. On going to the nest the family of magpies were all in the branches outside. They could not quite fly, but could, and did, hop around in a most exasperating manner. One could not be caught, and we were forced to be content



MAGPIE'S NEST IN COTTONWOOD TREE

with five. This number, however, proved sufficient to give us all the trouble in posing we really needed. This day was the first when the old birds had manifested the least anxiety while the photographer was at work. Usually the parents, if about, flew away silently at my approach and disappeared. But this time they were in the neighborhood all the time, screaming loudly, as if to tell us they had raised their family successfully so far and did not wish them interfered with.

I went again a week later and found the youngsters taking short flights. Thanks to experimenting with a new and untried lens not a single picture was secured. But one is given herewith of a bird seemingly about the same age, and



INTERIOR OF MAGPIE'S NEST



MAGPIE NESTLINGS 13 DAYS OLD



MAGPIES, 18 DAYS OLD

evidently, from his actions and those of his mother (or father), just out of the nest.

I have never been successful in taking a really good picture of an adult magpie: they are too cute, tho if one could find a tame specimen in good condition it could, of course, be done readily. They are quite easily tamed if taken young, and often learn to speak a few words more or less distinctly, but they need a large cage, and most of those one sees in captivity look rather miserable.



MAGPIES, FOUR WEEKS OLD





YOUNG MAGPIE, JUST OUT OF NEST  
ABOUT FIVE WEEKS OLD

As in the case of other members of the crow and jay family, there is a difference of opinion as to the value of magpies to man. No doubt they eat many insects, carrion, and very likely a few mice; but they eat eggs and young of other smaller birds, steal more or less grain, and I have heard them accused of picking at sores on the backs of horses, burros and cattle, and doing considerable harm in that manner.

Colorado Springs, Colorado.

## MAGPIES ON THE LA PLATA

BY M. FRENCH GILMAN

THE La Plata River is a small stream in southwestern Colorado, much like our southern California rivers. It flows into the San Juan, a tributary of the mighty Colorado. The growth in the river bottom and on the adjacent banks seems to form a magpie's paradise, judging from the numbers of these birds and their old nests. Beginning where the stream issues from the La Plata Mountains, near the mining town of Hesperus, on down the river for about ten miles, the birds fairly swarm. They are found in smaller numbers along the stream to its junction with the San Juan and then down that river as far as I have been: Shiprock, New Mexico.

The center of the population—*Pica pica hudsonica* population—seems to be near the Fort Lewis Indian School, in La Plata County. Here the river bottom widens and is covered with a dense growth of narrow-leaf cottonwood (*Populus angustifolia*), black birch (*Betula occidentalis*), paper-leaf alder (*Alnus tenuifolia*), two kinds of willow, a few aspens (*Populus tremuloides*), some scattering pines (*Pinus flexilis*), and the usual undergrowth of such altitudes, 7,500 to 8,120 feet.

On one side of the river is a mesa covered with scrub oak (*Quercus undulata*

and *Quercus u. gambeli*) which gives way to piñon (*Pinus edulis*) and juniper (*Juniperus occidentalis*) further down the river; while on the other side the mesa supports a growth of *Pinus flexilis* which in turn gives way to the piñon and juniper, with some scrub oak in the neutral zone.

This environment and an apparent immunity from the small boy and the gunner makes a condition very favorable to the study of the magpie. Where not disturbed these birds become quite tame and display a familiarity which borders on contempt. On the Fort Lewis school grounds no one is allowed to molest them and they dispute the kitchen scraps with the chickens and cats. For a time I cut all the meat used in the school and the magpies would be on hand every morning at the meat house for the waste pieces of meat, fat and bone. They would drive away the kittens but were more foxy with the old cats, one bird attracting the feline attention while another annexed the meat. They were rather familiar about the government kitchen and showed decided affection for the garbage barrel. When the pigs were fed was their opportunity. One morning when the snow was three feet deep on the level and the thermometer twelve degrees minus, I counted over one hundred of the birds at, on and in the pig pen. The pigs were too busy to resent their presence and some carried from one to three of the birds about on their backs—a convenient footwarmer for the magpies! All winter the pig pen was a rendezvous for from 75 to 125 of the birds and a few were on hand for meals during spring and summer tho most of them had then scattered along the river for nesting.

A peculiar feature of their actions was a decided knowledge of the "dead line" and a fair idea of the range of a shotgun. Inside of the school grounds they were tame and confiding, allowing me to approach within a few yards of them. But outside they were *bronco* and kept about 75 or 100 yards in the lead. I wished to secure a few specimens but of course respected the ground rules and also the birds' apparent trust in mankind. But out of bounds it was every bird for himself, and even then it was sometime before a specimen was secured. This, of course, was before the nesting season. When that opened the birds became more approachable, especially as they saw I did not molest them.

The first nest of the season was found March 28, about half completed, I judged. A week later it was full of snow. On March 31, I saw two more about as far advanced in construction as the first. The birds seemed to take their time in building, tho perhaps the frequent snows at that time interrupted their work. For on April 28, the nest I found just a month before contained seven eggs slightly incubated. The earliest instance of building was a nest with one egg on April 8, which nest had a complete set of eight eggs, April 15. During the latter half of April and the whole of May, I examined at least thirty nests. I found that the earlier sets were largest, most of them containing eight eggs. Five of the seven nests inspected in April had eight eggs, while two had seven each. Most of the nests examined during the first half of May contained seven eggs. Of nests observed after May 15, several had six eggs, two had five, and one contained four eggs: all complete sets.

Nesting places varied, many of the birds building homes in big pine trees on the mesa, but the majority of nests were placed in the narrow-leaf cottonwoods along the river bottom. A few built in scrub oaks, some in willows, and others in black birches. The height from the ground at which the nests were built varied from four to sixty feet; sixteen or eighteen feet was a fair average for the nests examined. Nests built in pines were generally highest and those in willows low-

est, tho I found one against the trunk of a cottonwood only five feet from the ground, while the tree was at least fifty feet tall. Nests in willows, oaks and birches were nearest the ground. The high nests were those in trees located along a highway, or in a lone tree on the mesa or in a clearing. The low nests were nearly always in trees or shrubs in a thicket, or else in wet marshy ground, hard to get at. The nest only four feet high was in a willow that stood on a tiny marshy island in a pool of stagnant water. One, five feet high, was in a willow on very boggy ground, with stagnant pools on three sides of it. One exception was a nest six feet from the ground in a cottonwood tree alongside of a much used wood road. But as this nest had only four eggs, the parents were probably not very particular whether their family matured or not. But it did, and made a safe get-away in spite of the low and exposed situation.

The birds did not seem very shy while building, and were rather in evidence when the nest contained eggs. But when the eggs were hatched! The old birds would come and perch on a branch just over my head or at one side barely beyond arm's length and tell me what they thought of me. And the way they swore at me was something fierce—if it was *not* swearing I'm no judge of profanity! Several times a bird only four feet from my head would savagely peck the branch on which he, or she, perhaps, sat, all the while muttering various kinds of threats. And if I picked up a young one their wrath was beyond expression. They would call in all the neighbors within a radius of half a mile to help make "war medicine."

The nests varied but little in material or manner of construction, all having the well-defined arch of twigs over the nest and the entrance at one side. Sometimes the arch was well connected with the nest proper, allowing insertion of the hand only at the entrance; while with other nests the hand could be thrust thru the "siding" quite easily. There seemed quite a difference in the size of nests and amount of material used. Some were large and well built, the walls being quite firm and the arch so dense that such nests had remained intact for a long time. Others were small, and quite frail and flimsy, particularly the superstructure—contract work, I presume! I noticed that the earlier nests were the well built ones while the late ones were inferior. I do not mean to say that all the late ones were inferior, but all the inferior ones were late. I think the birds build anew each year, as I saw no repairing done and all nests occupied were new ones. The great number of old nests in a good state of preservation made much work in examining; as often, until I attained some degree of expertness, I would climb up a difficult tree and find the nest to be a last year's one. Twice I was rewarded, however, as the old nest was occupied by long-eared owls. All the nests had thick plastered walls, well lined with rootlets and horsehair. It is a puzzle to me where the birds find so many rootlets when the ground is covered with snow.

The eggs were nearly uniform in size, coloring and markings, and seemed quite small for a bird of the magpie's dimensions. They greatly resemble the eggs of the Brewer blackbird, and also those of the California crow, in color and marking, and are between the two in size—nearer the blackbird, tho. Of the great number of eggs examined I found but one infertile, and only one with the heavier markings at the small end, "bald-headed eggs" the boys call them.

The magpies, with their striking black and white coloration, are a feature of the landscape, or, rather, "snowscape," as it might well be called, for about half the year. A southern Californian's involuntary thought on first sight of the

birds in flight is, "What large phainopeplas!" Their coloring from a distance appears alike, and their method of slow, dignified flight is quite similar. I speak of black and white plumage, but the black of *Pica pica hudsonica* is much mixed with a bronze green.

As far as I am able to judge by observation, the birds are beneficial, not only destroying injurious insects but acting as scavengers as well. Last summer the "grasshopper became a burden" and it was gratifying to see fifteen or twenty large families of magpies and as many Brewer blackbirds in the alfalfa fields all catching the hoppers.

*Breen, La Plata County, Colorado.*

### AMONG THE GULLS ON KLAMATH LAKE

BY WILLIAM L. FINLEY

WITH PHOTOGRAPHS BY HERMAN T. BOHLMAN

THE lake region of southern Oregon is perhaps the most extensive breeding ground in the West for all kinds of inland water birds. The country is overspread with great lakes, several of them from twenty to thirty miles across; and reaching out on all sides of these are vast marsh areas and tule fields extending for miles and miles.

The latter part of May, 1905, we set out to study and photograph the bird life of this region. For several days we packed thru the mountains with our heavy camera equipment, and then across a rolling, sage-brush country till we reached Lost River, which empties into Tule or Rhett Lake. Here we abandoned our horses for a stout rowboat, and then for over a month we cruised about Tule Lake, crossed over to White Lake and out into the Lower Klamath.

Tule Lake is a body of water about twenty-five miles long and fifteen to twenty miles wide, cut thru the northern half by the Oregon and California boundary line. A few miles to the northwest is Lower Klamath Lake, about the same size. Between these two larger lakes is a smaller body of water called White Lake, separated from the Lower Klamath by a broad strip of tule land.

The border of these lakes is a veritable jungle. The tules grow in an impenetrable mass from ten to fifteen feet high, and one can never get to a point where he can look out above the tops of the reeds and see where he is going. Then the foundation below is made of decayed vegetation and is treacherous to tread upon. One may wade along in two feet of water a short distance and sink over his head at the next step. We found a few places where the solid roots had formed a sort of a floor at the surface of the water, which was buoyant enough to support us. These precarious footholds were the only camping spots we had for two weeks.

In Lower Klamath Lake stretching for miles and miles to the west is a seemingly endless area of floating tule "islands," between which flow a network of narrow channels. These so-called islands are composed of the decayed growth of generations of tules. Most of them are soft and springy, and sink under the weight of a person.

Gulls love society. They always nest in colonies and live together the entire year. They are most useful birds about the water-fronts of our cities. These gulls have developed certain traits that mark them as land birds rather than birds of the sea. In southern California and Oregon I have watched flocks of them leave the ocean and rivers at daybreak every morning and sail inland for miles,

skirmishing about the country to pick up a living in the fields, following the plow all day long as blackbirds do, and fighting at the farmer's heels for angle worms. I have seen others rummage daily about pig-pens and gorge on the offal thrown out from the slaughter-houses. If any bird is useful to man, the gull is certainly of economic importance as a scavenger.

It was several days before we found the colony of nesting gulls, California and ring-billed (*Larus californicus* and *L. delawarensis*), on Lower Klamath Lake. We were led to the place by watching the course of the small flocks that spread out over the lake in the morning and returned homeward about dusk each evening. From a full mile away, with our field glass, we could see the gulls rising and circling over the low-lying islands. As we rowed nearer, the birds came out to



CALIFORNIA AND RING-BILLED GULLS OVER ROOKERY ON LOWER KLAMATH LAKE, OREGON; 283 BIRDS IN THIS VIEW

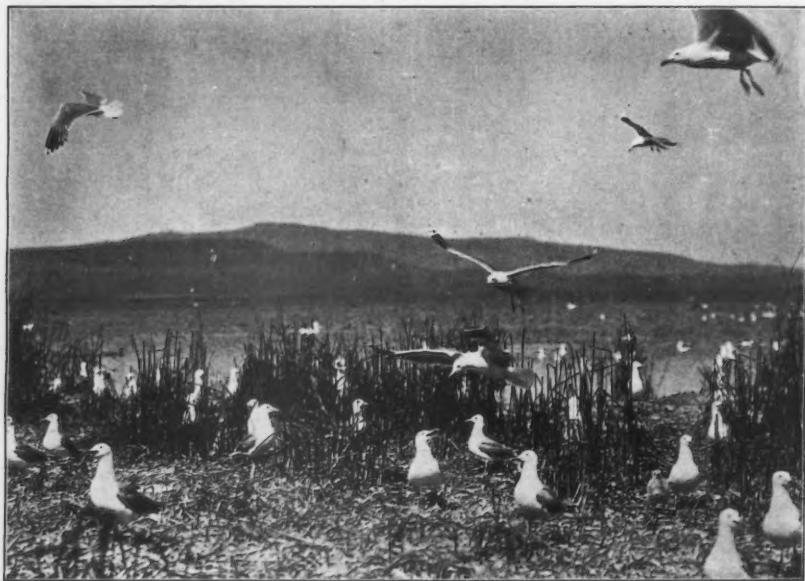
meet us, cackling excitedly at the dubious-looking craft approaching so near their homes. They swam about on all sides, curiously following in the wake of our boat. Cormorants flapped along over the surface, pelicans rose heavily from the water, and gulls and terns got thicker and thicker, until when the nose of the boat pushed in at the edge of the island, the air seemed completely filled with a crying, chaotic swarm. We stepped out among the reeds, but had to tread cautiously to keep from breaking eggs or killing young birds. Many youngsters crouched low in their tracks and others scudded off in all directions. Our presence caused such confusion among old and young that we jumped in the boat again and pulled away for fifty yards.

We wanted the opportunity of making an intimate study of the home life of



the gull, but unless in some way we could hide near at hand this was simply impossible, for the whole colony of birds went frantic whenever we approached their nests and young. To overcome this difficulty, we had brought a blind, specially built for the purpose. We had secured an old wagon umbrella of dark-green color. Then taking a long piece of green canvas, we had sewed hooks along the edge about eighteen inches apart, and when these were hooked in at the end of each rib, we had the sides hanging down all around, making a covered tent, in which we could hide with our cameras.

The next morning we pulled down below the gull colony and landed under cover of the high tules. Here we erected the blind and got underneath with our cameras. Then, holding up the umbrella, we began slowly edging toward the rookery. It is hard to say just what the gulls thought this queer-looking object was; they could see no legs, no head, but still it moved. Whereas the day before they had gone wild at our approach, now they paid little attention to the green thing that blended fairly well with the green tules, even tho it gradually approached closer and closer. After maneuvering for almost an hour, we reached



COLONY OF RING-BILLED AND CALIFORNIA GULLS ON TULE ISLAND  
IN LOWER KLAMATH LAKE

the edge of the colony and planted our blind by driving the extension handle of the umbrella into the mud. Some of the parents regarded the green tent with suspicion, backing off or rising to circle around where they could get a full view. But it was not long before the blind seemed to pass as part of the scenery and we were surrounded on all sides by the snow-plumaged birds coming and going, and paying little or no attention to us as we peered out or pointed our cameras thru the loop-holes we cut in the canvas.

Altho there were at least five hundred pairs of gulls nesting so close together, yet housekeeping was in no sense a communal matter. The nests were within two or three feet of each other, but each pair of gulls had its own home spot and the invasion of that place by any other gull was the challenge for a fight. Several times we were the excited spectators of fights that were going on just outside our tent. I watched one old hen, who was very angry because she couldn't find her chicks. As one of her neighbors lit near, she grabbed the tail of the intruder and gave it a sharp jerk. At that both birds grasped each other by the bill and a lively set-to followed. They pulled and tugged till suddenly the old hen let go and



ADULT AND YOUNG CALIFORNIA GULLS  
PHOTOGRAPHED FROM BLIND

grabbed her opponent by the neck and began shaking and hanging on with all the tenacity of a bull pup, till the intruder got enough and departed, leaving the victor with a mouthful of feathers.

times I saw old birds pounce upon youngsters that were running about, and beat them unmercifully. It seemed to be as much the duty of a gull mother to beat her neighbor's children, if they didn't stay home, as to whip her own if they moved out of the nest, but often this would lead to a rough and tumble fight among the old birds. Sometimes a young gull would start to swim off in the water, but it never went far before it was pounced upon and driven back shoreward.

Almost all the eggs had hatched and some of the young gulls were about grown. By watching the actions of the parents, I soon discovered that their greatest anxiety seemed to be to keep their children crouching low in the nest so they would not run away and get lost in the crowd. I saw one young gull start to run off thru the reeds, but he hadn't gone a yard before the mother dived at him with a blow that sent him rolling. He got up dazed and started off in a new direction, but she rapped him again on the head till he was glad to crouch down in the dry reeds.

Altho we had an excellent chance to study gull life from our blind, yet we found little pleasure in it at the time. The sun was pelting hot and there was not the faintest movement in the sultry atmosphere. We had to breathe the foulest kind of air on account of the dead birds and decaying fish scattered about, and we were standing in a muck that was continually miring deeper. Swarms of flies and

The parents seemed to recognize their own chicks largely by location. Several

mosquitoes harassed us constantly, while the perspiration kept dripping from our bodies, till, after three or four hours in the blind, our tongues were parched from thirst, and with loss of strength and patience, we were compelled to quit for the day. But for all we suffered there was a fascination in watching these wild birds going and coming fearlessly almost within arm's reach. For three different days we worked in the blind trying to picture the gulls in their characteristic attitudes of flight.

These gulls are masters in the air. I have watched by the hour birds similar to these following along in the wake of a steamer, but had never before had such chances with a camera. Often they poise, resting apparently motionless on outstretched wings. It is a difficult feat. A small bird can't do it. A sparrow hawk can only poise by the rapid beating of his wings. The gull seems to hang perfectly still; yet there is never an instant when the wings and tail are not constantly adjusted to meet the different air currents. Just as in shooting the rapids in a canoe, the paddle must be adjusted every moment to meet the different eddies, currents and whirlpools, and it is never the same in two different instants. A gull by the perfect adjustment of its body, without a single flap of the wings, makes headway straight in the teeth of the wind. I saw one retain a perfect equilibrium in a stiff breeze, and at the same time reach forward and scratch his ear.

Even tho we had good chances to picture the flying gulls, yet wing-shooting with a camera is such a difficult feat, that several dozen plates yielded but few good negatives. The short interval of time during which it takes a flying bird to sweep across the angle of vision of the lens generally gives the photographer only part of a second's time to aim, focus and shoot. A flight picture well focused and clear and satisfactory in its make-up is the record of a rare shot and a great many misses; perhaps it is more often a good guess, but it is rarely if ever made without a great deal of practice.

*Portland, Oregon.*

## EXPERIENCES WITH THE DOTTED CANYON WREN

BY WRIGHT M. PIERCE

IT was the latter part of June, several years ago, that I happened to be on a camping trip over in Coldwater Canyon, which is situated at the headwaters of the San Gabriel and which leads into Cattle Canyon, a branch of the right fork of the San Gabriel. Near the head of this beautiful Coldwater Canyon we found a cabin, which was badly worn by the weather and rough treatment that it had received at the hands of campers. Here in this cabin, the sides of which were made of logs with wide cracks between them, we made camp. The few rough shakes which served as a roof would afford poor shelter from either rain or sun. This cabin is typical of the old miners' cabins which one comes across when traveling thru the mountain wilds of southern California; but within I found a little home that would not, I believe, be called typical of miners' cabins.

This home was in an old dry-goods box which was suspended from the ceiling by baling wire. The box had evidently been used previously by campers as a



cupboard. Even tho it was open on one side it was pretty safe from the rats, suspended as it was from the ceiling.

As soon as I discovered the nest I told the rest of the party not to disturb the box or its occupants so as to give me a chance to identify the owners, as well as to study their actions. After a few moment's waiting I heard the shrill whistle or song of the dotted canyon wren (*Catherpes mexicanus punctulatus*) near the cabin. Almost immediately afterward the female wren appeared, carrying an insect in her beak with which to feed the four small hungry nestlings in the nest in the box. At first she seemed frightened at me, approaching the box only with the utmost caution, but after we had been in camp a few days she became accustomed to our presence and noise, and would enter the box even tho we were quite near. Both the male and female assisted in feeding the young. At night the female brooded the nest. I discovered this by taking a light and looking at her thru a crack in the box. She seemed frightened at the light but only blinked and crouched lower in the nest, as if to better protect her small babies.

I would have the nest in my possession now but for a misfortune that overtook it. After placing a small can lined with cotton in place of the nest, and after putting the youngsters in their new home, I laid the nest out intending to pack it at once. But for the time I forgot that mountain cabins are infested with rats. This fact was sharply impressed upon me when in the morning I went to get the nest; for there only remained the tattered remnants of a once beautiful structure. The rats in this camp, as I found out later, have been credited, and I do not believe falsely, with mysteriously carrying off everything that they can get at, even sides of bacon, boxes of crackers, and sacks of potatoes!

But to return to the nest: As I remember it, the top part resembled very much a wood pewee's in form and color, tho in size it was a little larger and deeper. The lower part was a great mass of coarse sticks, such as are always found in the nests of the wren family. The upper part was composed of fine grass, weeds, weed bark, and weed stems, covered over with an abundance of soft light-colored mosses and lichens. The lining was of soft feathers, a little hair, and a few soft weed fibers and the ever present piece of dried snake skin, which is nearly always found in the nests of the wren family. The inside diameter was about two and one-half inches, the inside depth about two inches. The outside diameter was about four inches and the outside depth, taking into consideration the mass of sticks, about five inches. All the upper part was very compactly and firmly woven, showing a high class of bird architecture.

I am happy to say that the old birds, after their first scare, did not seem to be concerned in the least about having their family transferred from a beautiful neat home to a rude tin can, and the young seemed to grow just as fast. All they seemed to need was plenty of food and a little warmth at night: No style for them.

Every morning before we got up we could hear the shrill clear whistle-like songs of our little friends as they sat on the roof of the cabin, or darted between and about the logs in search of their food. On the morning of our departure I took a last look at the youngsters. They were greedy now and showed much life. How I wished that I could stay with them and see that they left the nest safely. Even now, whenever I am in the mountains it is with pleasure and joy that, as I come around some point or cliff, I hear again the clear melodious song of one of these energetic little wrens. It always takes me back to the old cabin in Coldwater and its happy family of canyon wrens.

Claremont, California.

## NESTING OF THE PINE SISKIN IN CALIFORNIA

BY H. W. CARRIGER AND J. R. PEMBERTON

DURING the months of April, May and June, of 1903 and 1904, the writers examined in San Mateo and San Francisco Counties some twenty-five sets of the eggs of the pine siskin (*Spinus pinus pinus*). Owing to the loss of Carriger's collection and notes in the San Francisco fire the number of sets taken is not exactly known, but approximately ten sets were taken. To the writers' knowledge these are the only authentic eggs of this bird ever taken in California and a short description of their taking may not be uninteresting to CONDOR readers.

The taking of a male siskin with testes fully developed on April 5, in Marin County, and the seeing of several pairs of birds in San Mateo County a few days later, led to the suspicion that the birds were nesting in the vicinity



TYPICAL NEST OF PINE SISKIN IN CYPRESS

of San Francisco. Diligent searching for the birds had its result, and on April 12, 1903, a small settlement of siskins was discovered in San Mateo County about a mile from San Francisco Bay. During the following two months every opportunity was taken to study this interesting bird. On April 12, 1903, two partially built nests were found by watching the birds carrying dry grass from the fields to the nests. On April 23, 1903, our first set of eggs was taken from nest number two. The nest was twelve feet from the ground, on the top of a long cypress limb which hung directly over a well-traveled road. There were four eggs in this set, and one would have thought them worth four hundred dollars from the care we took in packing them.

Of over forty nests found of the pine siskin, only one was not built in a cypress tree, and this one was in the very top of a fifty-foot eucalyptus. The nests were built in full-grown cypress trees planted in rows along roads or as division-lines between fields.

Nests were usually about twelve or fifteen feet from the ground, but notes show records of several forty feet up, and one fifty feet from the ground. The site

chosen was almost invariably about six or eight feet from the trunk of the tree and upon the top of a good, strong, leafy limb. The nests were well built, quite compact, and slightly larger than those of the green-backed goldfinch whose nesting the siskins' closely resembles. Nests were constructed of dry roots, grass and leaves from under the cypress trees, and were generally, tho not always, lined with considerable hair. The nests were always of the same material and could be distinguished at sight from nests of the western chipping sparrow, California purple finch, and willow goldfinch, all of which birds were sometimes nesting within a few yards of one another.

The nesting season runs from the second week of April to the first of July. The earliest set taken was on April 10, 1904, and the latest was a nest containing one fresh egg on June 10, 1906. This same nest contained two very young birds on June 24, two weeks later. A siskin was also seen carrying grass into a cypress



TYPICAL NESTING SITE OF PINE SISKIN  
SAN MATEO COUNTY, CALIFORNIA

on June 24, and while this seems to point to nesting on into July, such instances are undoubtedly exceptional. The height of the nesting period, however, is from April 20 to May 10, and it was between these two dates in both years that the majority of nests were discovered.

The average set seems to be three eggs, but four is also a common number. Several sets of two eggs were taken in advanced stages of incubation, and also two sets of five, but these are rare.

The eggs are a pale greenish blue several shades lighter than eggs of *Astragalinus*, and are marked with chocolate spots and irregular blotches, with a number of pale lavender blotches which appear to be beneath the surface of the shell. Eggs vary from very nearly unmarked, to well marked about the larger end and sparingly over the whole surface. The average size of all eggs at hand is .63 by .48 inches.

*San Francisco, California.*

## A SEASON WITH THE PACIFIC HORNED OWL

BY NELSON CARPENTER

It is a hot August day in southern California. The nesting season has closed and some of our smaller birds are gathering in flocks. As I sit turning the leaves of well-filled note-books, many pictures of past seasons are brought to mind. The first scene to be recalled as I open each book is one near the home of some pair of horned owls.

The winter of 1903 was the last I spent in San Diego County, and was also the most productive in the way of notes. My first entry that season is dated February 8. It was made as soon as I reached home on a Sunday evening after a long wet tramp that is still fresh in my memory. My brother and I had started out immediately after dinner on a prospecting trip for *Bubo* treasure. Our destination was a deep canyon two miles from home. A pair of horned owls (*Bubo virginianus pacificus*) had occupied an old red-tail's nest in a tall sycamore for many years, but had selected a cave in a rock pile just above the old site the previous season. This cave I had found by "following my nose" when searching the gulch in 1902.

Instead of going up the ravine the same as usual, that year I went directly over the hill and entered the canyon above the hawk's nest. While scrambling down the hill a strong breeze brought a stench that did not smell like fresh meat by some days. Curiosity always gets the better of me so I followed the scent which soon led me to the bottom of a steep rock pile. Here among a heap of pellets and bones lay a dead horned owl. It took only a few moments to locate the cave, five or six feet above, which contained three fresh eggs half buried in the earth. This cavity was so easy of access that any species of mammal no matter how helpless could have entered without half trying. I packed the set, but it was not without regretting the loss of so faithful a pair of birds. However on the day when my first 1903 note was written my brother and I decided to follow the course chosen the previous year. From the top of the hill the red-tail's nest could be plainly seen and was deserted as we had expected. With little hope we hastened our steps to the rock pile. To our surprise Mrs. Bubo went flopping out from beneath our feet leaving two clean, nearly fresh eggs.

On our way home we met the Dixon brothers, and now that "the ice was broken" we determined to hunt up another pair. Operations began along a small creek near home where a horned owl had been shot from a hawk's nest in an oak tree February 2 of the previous year. The nest contained one egg on that date, but altho the bird had been shot we expected to find another female in possession.

Luck seemed with us; so we pounded the hollow trees and threw rocks at a couple of old hawk's nests but with no results.

Where the creek emerged from a deep canyon we divided our party, two of us climbing the hill to some rock piles while the other two continued up the creek bed. I, of course, was in the party who had to climb the hill. We soon reached our cave, however, and found it just as it had been for years. It was so situated that a fine view of the entire canyon lay before us, so it was an easy matter to follow the movements of the party below. They were two-thirds the way up the ravine and seemed to be having as bad luck as we, when to our surprise an owl flew out from under a large overhanging rock but a few feet to one side of them. One of the party disappeared into the cavern and soon emerged with another set of two nearly fresh eggs.

We were well satisfied with the afternoon's work; so started for home determined to get busy at once and pay other owl homes a visit.

The next Sunday found me fifteen miles from home at a much higher altitude than that where I had been the Sunday previous; for large patches of snow lay on the ground in many places. I knew the exact nest where a family of young *Bubos* had been reared in 1902, so I made straight for the tree. No leaves had started, so the nest could be distinctly seen for some distance. A nearer approach revealed to me the horns of an owl clearly outlined against a distant hill. Small sycamores are easy climbing with good irons and it took but a few minutes to cover the forty-nine feet of tree-trunk to the nest. One egg was all I saw. Five days later I returned and secured a fine set of three. I also did a little exploring at this time.

The numerous canyons in the neighborhood all contained a number of old hawk's nests. These were bombarded with rocks as fast as I could drive from one to another. I probably had gone a couple of miles and visited a dozen nests before I found that for which I was looking. The old owl left when I threw the first rock and disappeared up the gulch. The nest was a large affair fifty-five feet up in a live oak and one I had never seen before. Imagine my disappointment when I looked over the edge and saw one dirty egg. Closer examination however revealed a crushed one glued tightly to the bottom of the nest. I had no kick coming for the day's trip, so I returned home planning my next excursion.

Washington's birthday was my next opportunity to look for *Bubo* and I planned a long drive. A twenty-mile ride brought me to the top of a high cliff which had been formed by the gradual wearing of a creek leaving perpendicular walls one hundred feet high on each side. A horned owl flew from an old dilapidated eagle's nest, which proved to be empty. I now began my usual operations of rolling large rocks over the edge and watching results. After a couple of trials I flushed another owl from the center of the cliff. I felt encouraged but could see nothing. I tied my rope to a large rock, slid down to a ledge and worked my way down a crack in the direction of the place where I had flushed the bird. I soon found myself on a shelf about four feet wide and five feet long. A large rock had lodged on the outer edge but behind this lay three *Bubo* eggs. Rabbit fur and small bones littered the ledge, but made a poor nest lining especially when mixed with a number of pieces of broken stone. As a probable result, I found one of the eggs cracked in several places. I packed the set and in a few moments was at the top of the cliff. This set proved to be nearly hatched, so was prepared only after some difficulty.

After dinner we drove six miles further to a grove of sycamores containing a number of red-tails' nests. The hawks were flying around but had no eggs as yet. However, the tell-tale horns of an owl could be seen above the edge of one of the nests. The structure was the largest in the grove but fortunately in an easy tree and only fifty-five feet up. The nest yielded three nearly fresh, abnormally-shaped eggs. Had they been smaller they would have passed for barn owl's eggs.

Other species of *Raptores* occupied my time for the next couple of weeks; but on March 15, just three weeks later, I returned to collect red-tail rent. The first thing I found upon entering the grove was a dead hawk; but still hoping for the best I began to search the grove. Mrs. *Bubo* had taken possession of another nest very much to my surprise and had two more pointed eggs.

On the Sunday following I made a trip to the mountains after more red-tail rent. I had collected a set of two, two of three, and one of four and found I still



had time to investigate a new canyon. The first tree I found containing a nest was a large live-oak. A stick thrown into the branches flushed a bird, but it was not a red-tail. Yes, another horned owl! The twenty-second of March was pretty late, but the temptation was too great; so up I went fifty-five feet into the very top of the live-oak to be greeted by a rather surprised look from a big bunch of white down. There was an egg also, but it was addled. This I took, for it was the only addled egg of this species I ever found.

One would think that I had all the horned owls in San Diego County corralled by this time. But San Diego County is a large one and but sparingly settled. The more you travel about the more you find. The twenty-ninth of March found me after red-bellied hawk's eggs in the historic San Luis Rey river bottom. I had taken a nice set of three and was about to start for home when a strange nest caught my eye some distance up the river. A stick thrown at the structure flushed a horned owl; but it was late in the day, as well as in season, so I left her without further molestation.

Numerous pairs of owls are not the only things we are thankful for in my locality, for the collector admires the size of the trees. Southern California does not boast of such giant sycamores as those of Illinois in Patrick Henry's time; for my highest record is but sixty-three feet, while fifty feet is a good average.

*Escondido, California.*

## BIRDS OBSERVED FROM MARYSVILLE TO GRASS VALLEY

BY LOUIS BOLÄNDER

**L**AST year I had the fortune to attend a surveying party in California from Marysville, Yuba County, to Grass Valley, Nevada County, some twenty-six miles. We also went from Lime Kiln, a place on the line between the last two named places, to Auburn, Placer County.

The first Sunday I crossed the bridge to the south, leading from Marysville into the bottomlands of the Yuba river. What was once orchards and fields is now a waste of bottomlands covered with brush, swamps and trees. This waste was caused by the sediment from hydraulic mines and dredgers up near Hammon City gradually filling the river bed. Marysville, described in older geographies as a city on bluffs at the junction of the Feather and Yuba Rivers, is now surrounded by levees. At this date (May 6, 1906) Marysville was three feet below the bed of the river and in danger of flooding. Even as one enters the bottomlands rows of fruit trees can be seen apparently growing out of the sand and here and there is a house top sticking up, mute evidence of the power of nature over man.

I no sooner entered this barren district than I saw a nest up in an alder tree about six feet from the ground. Upon climbing up I flushed the mother bird, a close sitter, and found one fresh egg of the western chipping sparrow (*Spizella socialis arizonæ*). The nest was made of light-colored straws loosely put together, lined with a few black horsehairs, and easily seen from the ground. All the time I kept near the nest the mother kept up a chirping, at the same time flying around in the bushes close to the ground. The male did not come near at all.

About a hundred yards further in the brush I came across a small patch of

sword grass. When I came to about the middle I flushed a small greenish yellow bird. Even tho I saw just where the bird flew from I had quite a time finding the nest. It was built in the sword grass among a few blackberry vines about one foot from the ground, and contained four fresh eggs. The nest was made entirely of dried sword grass lined with black horsehair, and was deep like a cup. The eggs were white marked on one end with lines and dots of black tending toward the forming of a ring. I sat down and waited. Finally I heard a small chirrup behind me, and turned quickly. This was a mistake on my part for no bird did I see. Another long wait and another chirrup, this time to my left. I staid perfectly still this time and finally caught sight of the female and her mate hopping around in the nearby bushes. They gradually came nearer and as soon as I saw the bright colored male with his black mask I knew what I had found. It was a nest of the Pacific yellow-throat (*Geothlypis trichas arizela*). The birds made quite a disturbance, the male chasing his mate toward the nest, but he would not come nearer than within ten feet of it even tho she came and sat on the nest. As soon as she got comfortably settled he left.

A little further on was another patch of sword grass. Here I flushed another female yellow-throat. The nest was built of the same material as the first and was in the sword grass about a foot from the ground. It contained four perfectly fresh eggs. The parents staid near all the time I was around; I could hear them, but rarely caught sight of them. I found another nest of this species near the other end of the patch in about a similar location containing four fresh eggs.

On the other side of the road near a fresh water pond I saw a pair of yellow-throats. As soon as they saw me they disappeared in the underbrush. By this time I knew where to look for the homes of these birds. Seeing a few clumps of sword grass about thirty feet from where the birds were at first I commenced to look. The first clump revealed nothing. But the first time I parted the second clump I looked directly down in a yellow-throat's nest containing five fresh eggs. The nest was about one foot from the ground and built of the same material as the others. The parents did not come around.

The next was a nest of a western chipping sparrow which was built in a tree about seven feet from the ground and very easily seen. It contained four incubated eggs. This made incubated eggs, pretty nearly ready to hatch, on the same date I found the fresh egg. I also found two old nests of this species and two old nests of the bush-tit in the close vicinity. I also found a bush-tit's nest near here containing one fresh egg. The parents were absent.

I saw a nest about twenty feet up in a tree. Even tho it looked like an old nest I decided to climb for it. It was a cottonwood tree and had many little branches to retard my movement. When about ten feet up I came across a pretty beetle which I tried to capture and take along. We played chase for a while until finally he squirted some liquid in my face which stung so I made quick descent to the ground. I decided not to climb in that tree again. I washed the liquid off and moved on. There were quite a few beetles in the bottomland both large and small. The most numerous kind was about an inch and a quarter long and had a very pretty green back.

In a clump of young cottonwoods I had another new experience. I came across a dead tree, and about six feet up I saw what I supposed was an old nest. It was of lichens, etc., and saddled upon a limb against the main trunk. I pulled it down, but was much ashamed of myself when the parents returned. It was a pair of gnatcatchers (*Poliptila caerulea obscura*) which were just building. I replaced

the nest, but the parent birds deserted it. Towards evening when I returned I went into this clump of cottonwoods again and by keeping quiet was surprised to see this pair of gnatcatchers again building. This time they had selected the very top of a young live cottonwood for their home, which grew about thirty feet from their former tree. They already had the foundation built. Both birds helped to build but the female bossed the job. She would always be there to inspect the work of the male, but would come there alone too, at times. Before leaving the nest to get more material she would hop all around the nest, chirrup twice and then fly. Never while I watched did she chirrup more than twice. I did not have a chance to return again to see this nest.

The last nest I found this day was one of the spurred towhee (*Pipilo maculatus megalonyx*). While walking under the trees beside the road I stepped on a dead limb lying on the ground. A bird flushed so close that it gave me a scare. On looking I found the nest, flush with the ground and lined with a few grasses. It contained four fresh eggs. The parent birds kept up a continual noise while I was there.

MAY 7, 1906.—On the way to work I saw a yellow-breasted chat (*Icteria virens longicauda*). He flew about thirty feet up into the air, then spread his wings and tail, fluffed all his feathers up and slowly came back to the brush. All the time he kept up his imitations. A mate was evidently close at hand.

At lunch time I found another set of yellow-throat's eggs. The nest was in sword grass about two feet from the ground and contained five fresh eggs. The female was flushed. Near at hand I heard the familiar chirrup from the gnatcatchers. I easily followed them to their nest in the top of a slender cottonwood. The nest was made of lichens and cob webs lined with some kind of down and plenty of feathers. It contained three fresh eggs. The birds flew within an arm's length when I was near the nest and kept up a constant cry. I also saw several lazuli buntings, some small-sized herons, and two males and one female of the mallard.

YUBA DAM TO SHEEP DIP, MAY 7 TO 12.—As we got nearer to Sheep Dip, our next camp, I saw quite a few magpies. I saw one flock of about twenty. There were tree swallows in the dead oaks. Also saw one canvasback duck.

On May 11, I found a nest of the yellow-throat. It was built over a swamp in sword grass and contained four heavily incubated eggs. The parent birds did not return even tho I flushed the female. I also found a nest of the "marsh blackbird" built in the tules above the swamp. It was made of tules and mud, and contained four incubated eggs. The parents were noisy.

On the way home I found a nest in a coffee pot in an old tin can heap. Two days before I had seen the parent bird enter with food for her young, but did not have time to investigate. When I looked this time the nest was empty; but underneath the layer of feathers, I found a rotten egg which the parent bird had evidently covered. By a later set I saw it must have been a nest of the Vigors wren.

On May 12, I found a deserted nest of the linnet containing four eggs. The rain two days before had evidently caused the desertion. I also saw a ground owl beside a hole which must have been its nest. I caught a young killdeer near Sheep Dip. In a locust tree near Sheep Dip I found a new nest of the western kingbird. The birds never returned to it after I looked at it. In a similar tree down the road a little further I found a nest of the California shrike. It was about ten feet above the ground and was made of straws, etc., lined with hair and wool. There were six heavily incubated eggs in it. The parent bird did not utter a cry



while I was near. Lark sparrows were plentiful. The farmer of that country believes that if a swallow builds in his barn it will not burn; and some will even take off the insurance. A black phoebe is called a "storm bird" in that region.

BETWEEN SHEEP DIP AND HAMMON CITY, MAY 13, '06.—In an old magpie's nest in the top of an oak I found a set of five sparrow hawk's eggs, heavily incubated. The parent did not fly off until I was within five feet of the nest. This was in an oak tree near a farm house.

The next oak contained a nest of the yellow-billed magpie (*Pica nuttalli*) about forty feet from the ground. This contained five fresh eggs. It was made of oak twigs lined with mud and hair, and having a dome of oak twigs. The parent birds were very noisy. There were three other nests in nearby oaks all containing young. Each nest had an addled egg in it.

Bullock orioles (*Icterus bullocki*) were plentiful in the oaks. They built in the outthanging limbs, making their nests of hair, lined with wool, the heights ranging from six to twenty-five feet from the ground. Three nests I looked at had one fresh egg each, one nest had five incubated eggs and another five fresh eggs. The parent birds would stay above me in the oaks and chatter and growl as long as I was near. I saw one nest that had oats interwoven in the hair making the most beautiful nest of its kind I ever saw. I also saw a female oriole hanging beside an unfinished nest. Upon examination I found a single horsehair had become tangled around her neck and she had died beside her unfinished home.

The next nest was one of the Swainson hawk in an old magpie's nest in an oak. It contained two fresh eggs. The parent bird flew off when I came under the tree and sailed away slowly without a cry. There were many nests of the kingbird, but it was too early for their eggs. Mourning doves were numerous also, but no eggs were found. The English sparrow had invaded even this country. They built in the oaks near the farmhouses. I also found an unfinished nest of the Arkansas goldfinch in a poplar beside the river.

SHEEP DIP, MAY 13 to 24.—Found a nest of the meadow lark in a field, containing five fresh eggs. The bird was a close sitter. I also found a set of dove's eggs in a field laid on the bare ground. May 16, I found a ground owl's nest. I dug out the nest and found eight eggs and one young. Two of the eggs were fresh. When I reached in and pulled out the sitting bird by the leg she did not attempt to bite. When I let her go outside of the hole, instead of flying away, as I naturally supposed she would, she dodged back to her nest in the ground. The remains of a lark and a rat were in the nest. The entrance was lined with cow dung.

May 17, I dug out another owl's nest. It contained eight eggs, one of which was fresh, two or three rotten and the others in different stages of incubation. May 20, I found another set of the Swainson hawk in an old magpie's nest in an oak. It contained three incubated eggs. The parents made no outcry. The linnet's nests I observed all had incubated eggs. In another magpie's nest I found three fresh eggs of the sparrow hawk. The parent bird raised a big outcry. All the magpie's nests I saw had young. I also found another nest of the gnatcatcher. It was built in a live-oak about twelve feet from the ground. It was built of lichens, feathers, etc., and saddled upon a lone branch. The next nest was one of the California jay. It was built of twigs lined with hair, and looked flimsy. The parent bird slipped off and did not utter a sound all the time I was near. A little further on I found a nest of a flicker. It was in a pine stub about thirty feet from the ground. The hole followed a quarter turn in the tree and was about a foot deep. It contained six glossy, white eggs showing the yolk thru the shell.

By a stream I saw a small hole in a stub of a tree about six feet above the water. It contained the nest of a Vigors wren. There were seven fresh eggs on a lining of grass and many feathers. The bird was absent but soon returned. She uttered no cry while I was near. The woodpeckers' nests I saw were built in solid oak trees and could not be looked into. May 19, I found a fresh set of five linnet's eggs that had no spots on them. It was in a nest in an oak about twelve feet from the ground. There was also a set of doves' eggs in a nest in an oak about twelve feet from the ground. On the 24th I found another set of dove's on some drift wood by the creek.

AROUND SPENCERVILLE, MAY 27 TO JUNE 3.—I found a nest of the western lark sparrow containing four incubated eggs. The nest was built on the ground in the pine needles under a dead pine limb. The birds were quiet. Also a nest of the brown towhee containing four incubated eggs which had been deserted on account of rain. Another deserted nest of the same species contained one fresh egg.

The next day I found another nest of the western lark sparrow. It was built in the top of a scrub oak about six feet from the ground, and contained two incubated and one fresh egg. The two incubated eggs were probably caused by the bird covering the eggs during the few days' rain we had, the fresh egg being laid after. I also found another nest of the California jay. It was built in an oak about six feet from the ground and contained four fresh eggs. The parent bird, altho startled, did not utter a sound. This is about the only time this noisy bird will hold its tongue! The next day I found two nests of the valley partridge. One nest contained twelve, the other seventeen fresh eggs. Both were built on the ground under young oaks growing on the line that was brushed out the previous year. There were many deserted nests of birds, containing eggs and dead young. This was the first instance the farmers could remember of having such rains at this time of the year.

LIME KILN, JUNE 8 TO 10.—The new birds I saw here are as follows: I found two nests of the western robin, one containing two, the other three fresh eggs. Both nests were built in oaks near the ground and exposed. The materials used were straw, mud, string and rags. I found four nests of the spotted sandpiper (*Actitis macularia*). On an island in the middle of a creek I found a nest with one fresh egg. The egg was placed in a depression on the ground among a little grass. On the other side of the island was a mother with four young. She kept up a continual cry. The young matched the color of the ground. On the bank of the creek I found a nest of this species containing four fresh eggs. It was located on the ground under a tree. The depression was lined with a few grasses. The eggs all pointed toward the center. Another nest was built on the shore among the rocks and contained no lining. It contained four fresh eggs.

A nest of the lazuli bunting, containing four incubated eggs was built in a live oak bush about three feet from the ground. The materials were plant fibers lined with hair. Near the same place I found three nests of the black-headed grosbeak. One nest in an oak contained two fresh eggs, the other two were built in the same alder tree and contained one and three eggs respectively. All the nests were made of purplish-colored rootlets. In an adjoining alder, which I climbed to look into one of the grosbeaks' nests, I came across a yellow warbler's nest containing four slightly incubated eggs. It was built against the main trunk and was made of alder fibers, willow down and hair. The bird was absent. I also saw a nest containing five young flickers. They were so large they completely filled the excavation, and could fly when I took them out.

LIME KILN, JUNE 10 TO JULY 1.—I found a nest of the willow woodpecker in a rotten alder stub by a creek. The chips showed me that it was a late nest. It contained four fresh glossy white eggs. The parent bird was very noisy but did not come near. The next nests found were two of the western wood pewee. One contained four fresh eggs. The nest was saddled upon a limb of an alder about six feet from the ground. The other was built in a crotch of an alder about twenty feet from the ground and contained two eggs. The next nests were two of the valley partridge. One contained fifteen eggs and the other twenty-one eggs. I thought I had found a large set but another member of the party reported the finding of a set of twenty-two a couple of days later. This was the largest set reported. All nests were on the ground under bushes. Another peculiar nest I found was one built about ten feet down in an old mine shaft. It was some sort of a swallow's nest, built of red clay, and at this date contained three young. The parent birds would not come near, and were not seen closely enough to identify. It was quite dark and damp where the nest was.

Around Dry Creek, near Auburn, nighthawks were numerous. About dusk they would fly about high up in the air with their peculiar flight and cry. They would take three or four slow flaps of the wings, then three or four very fast flaps and rise in the air, always uttering their peculiar cry when rising. Once in a while they would dive straight down with a sound like an enormous bow-string being struck. It was likely to scare one if it came unexpectedly, and if one was not accustomed to it.

San Francisco, California.

## FROM FIELD AND STUDY

**Feeding Habits of the Lewis Woodpecker.**—Late on the afternoon of December 8, 1906, while riding between Witch Creek and Santa Ysabel, I noticed ten Lewis woodpeckers (*Melanerpes lewisi*) flying about over a creek catching insects in the manner of swallows, with flight that was graceful, resembling that of the latter. I never before noticed them feeding in this way, their usual habit being to perch on top of dead trees, darting from a limb to catch passing insects. They have been unusually common here this fall.—H. W. MARSDEN, *Witch Creek, California*.

**Notes From Placer County, California.**—Band-tailed pigeons (*Columba fasciata*) occurred here in considerable numbers this fall, appearing to be most numerous along Bear River, where ideal feeding grounds abound. The first noted were a few scattering birds on September 21, 1906. On October 17, a flock of about three hundred were seen feeding on acorns and "coffee" berries; and scores of birds were continually passing overhead, following the course of the river. Large numbers have been killed by hunters.

This country is very much alive and the common turkey vulture is seeking new climes! During the first week of October I noticed five flocks of from twenty-five to sixty buzzards (*Cathartes aura*) slowly making their way westward. They appeared to be young birds, but I have never been able to discover breeding grounds in this vicinity.

A few robins (*Merula migratoria propinqua*) have remained in this locality thruout the summer. They breed here in small numbers, but usually leave soon after the young are able to fly.

Quail (*Lophortyx californicus vallicola*) are plentiful, even tho the late rains destroyed large numbers of eggs. I collected a set last spring under rather peculiar circumstances. We had cut and cocked our meadow grass, when the late rains came and interfered with hauling. Some of the hay was ruined and it was a month before it was removed from the field. These haycocks

make an ideal nesting place for the quail, and many a nest did we uncover. From one cock I had just pitched the third forkful of hay to the rack, when a quail flew past my head apparently from the wagon. Search revealed the fact that with the last fork of hay I had picked up a quail with her nest and eggs and had landed all safely on the rack. Twelve eggs were found reposing unharmed in their nest of feathers.

To my knowledge the last of the much persecuted mourning dove (*Zenaidura macroura*) left this locality November 4, 1906. Sportsmen (?) demanded of the Supervisors that they open the shooting season two weeks earlier than formerly, contending that by August 1, all the doves had gone to the valley. Yet on that date I knew of twenty nests, containing eggs or young, within an eighty-acre field on this place, and the birds were fairly plentiful thruout September.

A stray yellow-billed magpie or California crow occasionally visits at this altitude (1750 feet), but returns immediately to his valley home.—ERNEST ADAMS, *Clipper Gap, California*.

**Band-tailed Pigeons at Santa Barbara.**—On September 18, two of these handsome birds alighted on a lilac bush in our garden. They were quite tame, allowing me to approach within a few feet; thus I had an admirable chance to identify them as the above named. As they did not attempt to feed during their short stay, it is my supposition they were migrating, and had stopped over to rest. This is the first time I have seen *Columba fasciata* in this County.—REGINALD ROGERS, *Santa Barbara, California*.

**A Notable Sparrow's Nest.**—A nest of *Passer domesticus*, with two entrances, blew down from its unstable perch in the Virginia creeper on the side of my house, November 25. The sparrow had industriously gathered together a mass of dry grass as big as a hat. The nest, which was deep, was warmly lined with feathers. At one side, below, there was an opening thru the feathers evidently designed as a "look out," or ventilator. The bird might have escaped thru the hole in case of necessity, but probably used the main entrance exclusively as a point of ingress, as the feathers about the extra orifice projected blades outward, showing that the bird could not have well flown in without disarranging the downy window casement.—H. R. TAYLOR, *Alameda, California*.

**The Alaska Water-thrush in California.**—On August 16, 1905, I obtained an example of *Seiurus noveboracensis notabilis* which provides the second record known to me for this State. The bird was flushed from a tangle of bushes which surrounded a spring in a ravine, a hundred yards or so back of Jim Johnston's house at Cactus Flat. This is a "pocket" at about 6000 feet elevation, on the desert slope of the San Bernardino Mountains, San Bernardino County, California.

The region is an arid one, and I was at the spring on purpose to scrutinize the hordes of birds which were constantly visiting it for a drink and a bath. A good part of these were transients, which reminds us again that to stand the best chance of finding northern stragglers, one must strike the fall migration early in August.

The water-thrush was among a throng of warblers and small sparrows, several of the latter in streaked juvenal plumage, and I did not recognize it as anything noteworthy, until it flew up out of the shade and perched with other small birds, drying themselves in the open branch-work of a fire-killed oak. Then my attention became fixed upon it because of the peculiar recurrent dipping movement of its body, and its identity flashed into my mind. I promptly "auxed" the bird, and found upon skinning that it was a "bird-of-the-year," as shown by the large "windows" in the skull yet ungranulated. To be more explicit the specimen (No. 7157, Coll. J. G.) is in complete first-winter plumage. It is precisely like examples from northern Alaska in both coloration and measurements.—JOSEPH GRINNELL, *Pasadena, California*.

**Another New Record for Marin County, California.**—For the first time in my long residence in this County it has been my fortune to see a yellow-headed blackbird in this part of the State. On October 17, I saw two males of this species (*Xanthocephalus xanthocephalus*) flying north and close enough to be readily distinguished, being just about out of gunshot, but near enough to be unmistakable. There is no particular reason why this species should not be found here occasionally; but no individual has been previously recorded that I know of.—JOSEPH MAILLIARD, *San Francisco, California*.

**The English Sparrow in Los Angeles County.**—On dropping off the train at Newhall for the outing meeting, May 19, 1906, the first birds observed were a colony of English Sparrows, (*Passer domesticus*) which had their homes about the station buildings, and in the pines and eucalyptus trees adjacent. There was the same noisy chatter heard everywhere in the East; and the black-throated males with the duller females, made identification unmistakable. Thus we see that this little pest is gradually closing in on us, Tehachapi having heretofore afforded the nearest record (see Howard, CONDOR VIII, p. 67).—J. EUGENE LAW, *Hollywood, California*.

# THE CONDOR

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of Western Ornithology

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JOSEPH GRINNELL, Editor, Pasadena.  
H. T. CLIFTON, Business Manager, Box 404, Pasadena  
WILLIAM L. FINLEY } Associate Editors  
JOSEPH MAILLIARD }

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## EDITORIALS

Thru a series of unforeseen contingencies, the second and third parts of Finley's condor article will not appear until later in the year, tho both will surely be run in our present volume. The delay, however, will be beneficial in the long run; for it will enable Mr. Finley to further perfect the material on hand, and also to gather additional data from outside sources.

It will be remembered that Mr. Lee Chambers, of Santa Monica, has for several years been accumulating information respecting the California condor. A surprisingly large number of records have been authenticated, and the literature of the subject thoroly overhauled. Now that Mr. Finley has so good a foundation, Mr. Chambers has very generously insisted upon turning all the results of his own work over to Finley, to be incorporated with the latter's "Life History." This will all appear in due time in "THE CONDOR."

The California Academy of Science's expedition to the Galapagos Archipelago, which left San Francisco June 28, 1905, returned safely to the home port the first of December last. All members of the party were in good health, tho glad to get home. Mr. R. H. Beck, who headed the expedition, considers the collections obtained by far the most extensive and complete of any that have ever been taken from that group of islands. These large quantities of material, in almost every branch of natural history, await the work of specialists before the actual scientific results become fully known.

The most important local record in our present issue is the new one for the English sparrow, which has at last made its appearance in Los Angeles County. The approach of this invader along the railroad lines from the north has been slow but steady, and its ultimate establishment here has been expected for years. It will now be interesting to see how the native linnet fares in competition. Yet it will probably be several years before the pestiferous interloper begins to affect our native bird fauna.

Mr. R. C. McGregor calls our attention to the following rich sample of popular ornithology taken from a no less substantial current periodical than the *Century Magazine* (March, 1906, page 788).

"In the feathered world of the West there is an analogous case of the utilization of the cactus-plant for the protection of progeny. Singularly enough, though in a dry country, it is a wading bird, one of the varieties of the curlew, with a long bill and long slender legs, which, like the antelope, uses the cactus as a home and defense for her nest and young.

"She will carry sticks in her long bill and drop them in position as nearly as possible in the center of a cactus-patch while hovering over it. When she has accumulated enough, alighting on the heap, she arranges her nest, wherein she lays four beautiful turquoise-colored eggs about as large as those of a domestic hen, and then comes and goes from her nest at will, knowing that it cannot be molested."

McGregor asks, "Did you ever hear of such a stunt by a curlew? Does any curlew lay 'beautiful turquoise-colored eggs'?" We would like to know, too!

Mr. W. L. Finley was recently appointed lecturer for the National Association of Audubon Societies. He lectured in Baltimore, Chicago, Grand Rapids, Cincinnati, Indianapolis, St. Louis, St. Paul and other cities in the interests of the Audubon work. During the spring he will make a lecture tour thru Oregon and Washington for the National Association.

We are in receipt of a cordial letter from Dr. D'Evelyn, the new president of the Cooper Ornithological Club. He enters upon his new duties enthusiastically, and we trust that a new era of activity will be inaugurated in the Northern Division of the Club, where interest in birds has been rather feeble since the "quake." Dr. D'Evelyn hints of certain plans for the spread of the Club's influence, especially along the lines of bird protection and educational work.

The Fish Commission steamer *Albatross* returned to San Francisco, December 11, after a very successful scientific cruise along the North Pacific coast of Asia. Dr. C. H. Gilbert, of Stanford University, was in charge of the work, and Professor J. O. Snyder was one member of the party. Marine forms of life were the chief objects of interest, and vast quantities of specimens were properly preserved. The fishes received most attention, and these will be worked



up by the ichthyologists at Stanford. As far as we are able to learn, the ornithological results of the expedition were relatively unimportant.

#### PUBLICATIONS REVIEWED

The present reviewer cannot remember to have ever read a book more profitable, and at the same time entertaining, than BEEBE'S "THE BIRD".<sup>1</sup> The brief title at first glance seems to lack sufficient definiteness as to the real nature of the subject-matter. The book has nothing to do with systematic ornithology; species are mentioned merely incidentally; but a multitude of subjects related to evolution and adaptation are dealt with. After all, as we think it over, the book *does* treat of the bird, inclusively and broadly. Yet one must have read and studied the whole book to comprehend its scope.

Our first pleasure was in simply "looking at the pictures." Every one of the 371 illustrations are significant *per se* of some fact of bird structure or habit: One does not have to read the context to gain at least some suggestion of what the pictures are meant to show. There is every indication that Mr. Beebe has spent plenty of time in securing the most instructive photos for the bringing out of each desired point.

And the text is as good as the pictures. The style is non-technical, but not too "popular" in most places. Here and there, there is a shade too much of literary ornateness, which to our minds does not strictly harmonize with the scientific treatment of a subject. But this is so inconsequential a criticism, that we feel almost ashamed to have ventured it.

The following are a few of the subjects discussed: The ancestors of birds; growth and structure of feathers; framework of a bird; organs of nutrition (tongues, crops, gizzards); food and feeding-habits of various birds; breath of a bird; senses; wing-structure and flight; theories of coloration; the bird within the egg.

Beebe's "The Bird" is an extraordinary book, and we advise our readers to get this one above any other work on birds of the same size.—J. G.

"THE PROTECTION OF OUR NATIVE BIRDS" is the title of a pamphlet<sup>2</sup> by Professor MONTGOMERY of the University of Texas. In the publication and distribution of such carefully

and convincingly drawn up papers as this, can the educational centers of each state do much to spread the cause of bird protection. As Professor Montgomery suggests, it is thru the *schools* that the knowledge of the value of birds can be emphasized at large. Nature courses in the lower grades are most productive of widespread good, it has seemed to us. The *economic* value of bird-life is what will appeal, by way of the school children, to the adults of the community.

The present paper presents the subject strongly, and cannot fail to have its good effect. So good a service has thus been done by Professor Montgomery that we are quite ready to pardon his extreme attitude in respect to collectors. It is too bad, tho, that people have to go to extremes!—J. G.

In a profound essay on "THE PROBLEM OF THE ORIGIN OF SPECIES," Professor C. O. WHITMAN briefly reviews the progress of our knowledge of the methods of species-formation, and contributes to their further understanding. While agreeing that the majority of animals may be subject to ordinary or fluctuating variation (that is, variation uniformly in all directions), and that evolution in such cases seems to be solely directed by natural selection (or survival of the fittest), Professor Whitman maintains that further, in some cases at least, there is *orthogenesis* as a result of continuous asymmetrical or "definite" variation.

Orthogenesis, as the present reviewer understands it, is the evolution of a linear series of descendants in a definite direction (as regards some one or more specific characters), irrespective of the Darwinian essential of fitness or unfitness and resulting persistence or elimination of individuals. This would conveniently account for the very beginnings of certain structures, now clearly adaptive, but of which we cannot imagine a series of *useful* rudimentary stages.

Professor Whitman has been a strong advocate of experimental evolution and is himself at work along that line. For the past ten years he has had under constant observation a succession of generations of the common pigeon (*Columba livia*). Supplementing these, he makes use of specimens of all available wild species of pigeons and doves. He has selected, for reasons of convenience, as characters for observation, the color-patterns shown on the outer surface (coverts) of the wing. The endeavor was to find a case where he could trace the history of one particular specific character. An ideal case seemed to be provided by the

1 The Bird | Its Form and Function | By | C. William Beebe | Curator [etc., 4 lines] | with over three hundred and seventy illustrations | chiefly photographed from life | by the author | [vignette] | New York | Henry Holt and Company | 1906; pp. xii-496, 1 plate, 371 text figures.

2 The Protection of Our Native Birds | By | Thos. H. Montgomery, Jr. | Professor of Zoology [Bulletin of the University of Texas No. 79, Scientific Series No. 8; Oct. 1, 1906; pages 30].

3 The Problem of the Origin of Species | By Charles Otis Whitman [Reprinted from "Congress of Arts and Sciences, Universal Exposition, St. Louis, 1904", Vol. V; pages 18 (repeated?)].

pigeon. The origin of the barred wing-pattern is thought to have been from the uniformly checkered style. Both patterns, by the way, occur among domestic pigeons!

Several sources of evidence are adduced to lead to this conclusion. One is that different wings (of *Columba livia*) may be arranged so as to show uninterrupted gradation from one extreme to the other. Another source of evidence is obtained by comparing in a similar way different wild species. We venture to suggest that neither of these sources of evidence show anything as to the direction of variation *thru time*; and this, it seems to us, would be the crucial point to be proven.

Another source of evidence is based upon the axiomatically-accepted idea that the male plumage is the most specialized (farthest evolved), the female next, and the juvenal least (that is, most primitive). This sequence, apparently in harmony with the orthogenetic theory, is shown in the wing-patterns of many wild species of pigeons, and Professor Whitman places much value upon this as indicating the direction of the development of the characters.

But we would object that it seems just as clear, in a great many species of birds, that the juvenal plumage is the *specialized* one (for the sake of protection), the female often as much, or nearly as much, specialized (and for a similar reason), and the male, therefore, the most *generalized*! This reverse theory accords better with the demands for survival, and would therefore be explainable by natural selection. There are many adaptive structures in the young, lost in the adult because useless; for instance, the calcareous nodule on the tip of the chick's bill. Ontogeny does not repeat phylogeny in every detail.

The best point in proof of the theory of orthogenesis was obtained thru the breeding and selection of tame pigeons. It was found that artificial selection could accomplish the reduction of the number of checkers, but would never lead from bars to checkers. The author concludes from this that "the direction of evolution can never be reversed." Hence the direction of evolution in the present case is from the checkered pattern towards the barred. As there seems to be no significance at present for these markings (either directive or protective), they appear to the author to exhibit an instance of orthogenesis. We must confess that, while we do see several such cases of traits exhibited in progressive series (if properly arranged), we do not clearly see evidence of an active variation thru time in any one direction.

We are pleased to remark that Professor Whitman, after careful consideration, concedes but little probability to the frequent occurrence of mutations, according to the theories upheld

by Hugo de Vries. Mutation, the abrupt appearance of new species without gradual successive and continuous transitional stages, must be rare among birds, if it occurs at all.

However, we cannot here take space to carry on a discussion of the problem of the origin of species, which is still the greatest problem in biology. What a field there is in ornithology for the student of evolution! The very fact that birds have been so thoroly worked systematically and geographically is all the more reason why this is a particularly advantageous field for such studies. And yet we hear of young men at college being advised to direct themselves to investigation in any other group than birds: "Birds are too well worked!"—J. G.

## MINUTES OF COOPER CLUB MEETINGS

### NORTHERN DIVISION

NOVEMBER.—The Club met November 24, 1906, in the Barbara Jordan Library of Ornithology at Stanford University, California.

Vice-president Fisher occupied the chair. The minutes of the previous meeting were read and approved. The following proposals for membership were made: John W. Martin, 339 N. First St., San Jose, Cal., by D. A. Cohen; Miss Flora A. Randolph, 1706 Walnut St., Berkeley, Cal., by D. A. Cohen; Prof. O. P. Jenkins, Stanford University, Cal., by H. O. Jenkins.

The following were elected to active membership: Chas. Reining, 601 Webster St., Palo Alto, Cal.; F. W. Weymouth, 326 Lytton Ave., Palo Alto, Cal.; John E. Thayer, Lancaster, Mass.; Henry F. Duprey, 919 Morgan St., Santa Rosa, Cal.

Nominations for officers for 1907 were made as follows: President, Dr. F. W. D'Evelyn; senior vice-president, Bertha L. Chapman; junior vice-president, Rollo H. Beck; treasurer, H. T. Clifton; secretary, H. O. Jenkins.

The program was now taken up. Prof. V. L. Kellogg favored the Club with an interesting resume of his forth-coming work on the Mallophaga, touching particularly on the peculiar distribution and habits, and the resulting formation of species, of these external bird parasites. N. K. Carpenter read a paper entitled, "A Season with the Pacific Horned Owl", and brought out some very interesting facts in regard to the life history of this bird.

Mrs. Park then spoke to the Club concerning the passage of a Bird and Arbor Day Bill in the California Legislature. Thereupon the following resolutions were adopted:

WHEREAS, it has come to the knowledge of the Cooper Ornithological Club that an effort will be made to establish in the State of California, by act of Legislature, a Bird and Arbor Day, to be observed by the Public School children; and

WHEREAS, the observance of this day is not to be made

at all compulsory, and the day is not to be constituted a legal holiday, therefore be it

*Resolved*, that the Cooper Ornithological Club heartily approves of and endorses this movement as one of great educational importance which will tend to secure better protection for our native birds, and be it further

*Resolved*, that a copy of these resolutions be placed on the Minutes of this Club, and published in the January, 1907, issue of *THE CONDOR*.

H. O. JENKINS, *Secretary*.

#### SOUTHERN DIVISION

NOVEMBER.—Residence of Joseph Grinnell. Pasadena; November 30, 1906. Meeting was called to order by President Howard, with members Grinnell, Morcom, Clifton, Willett, Owen, Joseph Dixon, Watson, Taylor and Law present, and as visitors Messrs. James Dixon, and Howard Wright. The minutes of the last meeting, Oct. 3, 1906, were read and approved.

On motion duly carried, the Secretary was instructed to cast the unanimous ballot of the members present, electing Clarence B. Linton to active membership; this formality was complied with by the Secretary.

The applications for active membership of Reginald Rogers, of Santa Barbara, and C. M. Harris, Willard Chamberlain, and Arthur Howard, of Los Angeles, all proposed by O. W. Howard, were read and filed for final action at the next meeting.

Mr. Grinnell urged on all those present, the importance of sending in all notes on Los Angeles County birds, as the compilation of the new list will soon be under way. A great deal of data has been gathered since the previous list, and all of this should be placed at Mr. Grinnell's disposal as soon as possible. Mr. Grinnell also expressed his desire for notes on comparative bird populations, to the end that valuable information relating to increase or decrease of certain species might be recorded.

A very interesting paper by Wright M. Pierce on the dotted canyon wren was read by the Secretary in the absence of the author. Mr. Pierce described vividly his observations of a brood that was raised in a deserted miner's cabin in a canyon near the foot of Old Baldy.

After an inspection of several interesting series of skins from Mr. Grinnell's private collection, dainty refreshments, served by Mrs. Joseph Grinnell and Miss Grinnell, wound up a very enjoyable evening. Adjourned.

J. EUGENE LAW, *Secretary*.

DECEMBER.—The regular monthly meeting of the Southern Division of the Cooper Ornithological Club was called to order by President Howard Saturday evening, Dec. 29, 1906, at

the residence of H. J. Lelande, 1320 E. 15th Street, Los Angeles, with members Lelande, J. Grinnell, Clifton, Cooper, Alphonse Jay, and Law present, and as visitors Messrs. Fordyce Grinnell and Willard Chamberlain.

The minutes of the last meeting were read and approved. Applications for active membership were proposed as follows: Austin Paul Smith, La Jolla, Cal., by H. W. Marsden; Jesse C. A. Meeker, Danbury, Conn., by O. W. Howard; John F. Ferry, Field-Columbian Museum, Chicago, by H. S. Swarth.

On motion by Mr. Clifton, seconded by Mr. Lelande and duly carried, the Secretary was instructed to cast the unanimous ballot of the members present, electing to active membership, the following named persons already presented: Henry K. Coale, Chicago, Ill.; C. M. Harris, Los Angeles, Cal.; Willard Chamberlain, Los Angeles, Cal.; Arthur Howard, Los Angeles, Cal.; Reginald Rogers, Cheshire, Conn.

A communication from Dr. Frederick W. D'Evelyn, the nominee for President of the Northern Division, was read and heartily endorsed by those present.

An interesting letter from our former and long-time President, Mr. F. S. Daggett, now of Chicago, was read, describing an outing with a few of the old standbys early in November. Messrs. Dean, Gault, Woodruff, Swarth, and Daggett composed the party. A half dozen good winter visitors were observed, including white-wing and American crossbills, and snow-flakes. Our eastern brethren certainly are entitled to our heartfelt sympathy when they take a winter trip. It would be rubbing it in too much to mention the names of the dozens of good birds an observer, perfectly comfortable in a khaki shirt outfit and sombrero, can see in a day's winter stroll in this locality. Ask Mr. Daggett if it's not so!

The club then proceeded to nominations of officers for 1907. The following nominations were made and nominations closed in each case on proper motion: For President, Mr. G. Frean Morcom, Pasadena; for Vice President, Mr. G. Willett, Los Angeles; for Secretary, Mr. J. Eugene Law, Hollywood; for Treasurer, Mr. W. Lee Chambers, Santa Monica. Towards the close of the evening Mrs. Lelande served elaborate refreshments. Adjourned.

J. EUGENE LAW, *Secretary*.

NOTE.—The lateness of this issue of *THE CONDOR* is regretted by all concerned; but it is one of those things that can't be helped, and is liable to occur sometime to everyone. The reason in the present instance is the serious illness of our printer and simultaneously of several of his office force.—ED.



